Moods &
Outdoor Verses

by
Richard Askham

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By Richard Askham

Binns, Henry Bryan

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Pan & Bears after E. Frémiet—see p. 64

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DEEMING DALE

WHO is it knocks at my window ? Ho
Who is it rides the gale ?
" Yonder the Pitiless Ladies go
Adown the Deeming Dale :

" The cold of a cloud is over them,
Open the pane and see ;
All the women of perilous dream
Go drifting drearily,

"One by one on the bitter wind
Companionless and grey,
With the empty sound of a host behind
To bring them on their way.

"But yonder, yonder comes the Moon,
And yonder see them turn :
Jewelled and fierce their hunting shoon
Fly flashing through the fern."

Now whither do they ride so fast
Upon the whirling wind ?
"Fasten the pane against the blast !
Hasten and draw the blind."

Who is it knocks at my window? Ho
Who is it rides the gale?
"And who would join the hosts that go
Adown the Deeming Dale?"

WEST WIND

THE billows of the west wind surge and run
Lipping along the long length of the wall;
The leaves are parched and weary of the sun,
And glad into the windy wave they fall:

The old trees laugh because they know once more
The surges of the west wind swell and swing
About their nakedness, and feel them roar
Foaming against the wall to which they cling:

Lipping along the long length of the wall,
  Stealing away the burden of the year
The billows of the west wind sweep and call
  A message which the old trees laugh to hear.

Yon goes the sun ; and cold and clear and pale
  Rises the first impassive winter's night ;
And summer is forgot upon the gale
  And swept along its billows out of sight.

IN THE COLORADO DESERT

SALT barren bottom of forgotten seas
Wider than the horizon, saving where
The bare blue mountain-wall is lifted up ;
Bald San Jacintho's eyeless vision looks
Across your waste and nothing finds to tell
God any more remembers what He made ;
No cloud across that blue : no cloud of dust
Traversing that grey field with living feet,—
No bones to tell aught ever died here : only
Desperate devil-weeds and cactus growths
Bitter with immemorial neglect.

Yet these forgotten creatures of the waste
Fiercely remember all; again they write
With crabbèd fingers on the burning page
Letter by letter that defiant word
Which one time was a rose in Paradise.

OCTOBER

For them that dwell in streets, Cathedrals make
A pillared gloom—a haunted twilight, rich
With many-coloured low, horizon-lights—
Forests of solemn peace,—glades where the wind
Of organ-pipes may wander in and out
Among the shafts and banners, and where God
Amid the worship dwells.

But now for me
It is October, when the woods begin
To let their labours go, and all their ways

Are deep in fallen leaves and thick with gold.
About the plumey dark that pine-trees make
Swift-running shadows steal, and jewelled lights
Silent as sunbeams throng the solemn gloom.
Now, through the many pillared stillness, falls
A meteor leaf into the yellow pool
Beneath the chestnut; like a crimson pane
Rubies a maple in the slanting sun.
The fronded undergreen stirs to and fro,
The bracken-banners move along the glade,
While ever through the fretted space above
The wind goes chanting.

Oh, the woods are full
Of worship! Christ-like, the October sun
Shines and discovers God among the trees.

NOVEMBER

'Tis the season of despair,
  Nothing grows, and nothing grieves;
The impenetrable air
  Sulks among the rotting leaves:

Nothing grieves, and nothing grows
  But the toadstools in the moss;
Never any bugle blows,
  Never any tempests toss:

For the year is fall'n asleep
  Old and rich and well-at-ease;
And they slumber, they who keep
  Record of our destinies. . . .

Blow North-east wind, keen and bare
  Gleams thy sword across the hill,
Shouts the shuddering battle-blare
  Of thine unrelenting will:

And the sleeping woods begin
  To awake and answer; strange
Voices that are old and thin
  Cry the syllables of change:

Rock the branches overhead,
Crying, moaning; and below
Gusts of laughter snatch the dead
Leaves and swirl them to and fro.

Hail again, terrible One,
Lord of passion, King of fear!
Days of peace are past and done
And the winter days are here.

Only blow not in the spring
When the gentler wind-flower blows;
Blast no orchard's blossoming,
Murder no adventurous rose.

MERMAID

ANGUISH and hope and high and desperate deed
Go by me, and I hear unpitying
The wild appeal of those that fail, and sink
Battered among the rocks; athwart the storm
The lantern urges out into the dark
Its passionate vain light.

But as for me
I have forgotten any kindling care
In the world's story. Here I sit and wait
The ending of the tale; then shall I hear

A clarion calling from across the deep,
And catch a footfall on the impetuous wave,
And lo, he comes! Till when I dream among
These idle playthings that the ocean puts
Between the empty chasm of years and me.

Wherefore on Faralone I watch the ships
Making the port, or plunging out away
Upon their eager errands. Here I sit:
I go upon no errand: I begin
No labour, nor accomplish none; the sound
Of ocean is about me, and the drift
Of all things going on after the moon.

ADVENT

I WAITED : he is come. Oh, I have dreamed
Of him and doubted ; now I understand,—
In all the day it was his glory gleamed,
In all the darkness I have touched his hand.

'Tis the new life beginning ; now I see
This cell is grown too small to hold me : I
Am driven out by joy's necessity,
For if I were to linger, joy must die.

So I must out and on. Fling the door wide,
Good Porter, whether thou be life or death!
These narrow walls are not for me; outside
The whole world breathes the wonder of his breath.

OF BOLTS AND SHELLS

Shrieks the wild wind i' the bolted door—
That treacherous wind !
But listen, unconfined,
He is all mirth across the open moor.

Haunted, confused with pent-up sound,
This barren shell ;
But plain each syllable
Of all the shouting waves beyond its bound.

And so shrieks Fate i' the soul confined—
Ah, treacherous Fate!
The heart emancipate
Hears her all laughter like the moorland wind.

And so, confused as in a shell
The pent-up sound,
Goes Thought, till all around
He feels the Ocean, and breaks through the spell.

THESE FORTY YEARS

Do I look young? Oh, I am strangely old:
It is forty, forty years since I was young;
There hangs a solid veil of forty years
Between me and the sunlight.

Forty years—
Ah, that is fourteen thousand winter days
Of winter sunlight—wan, emaciate,
Pitiful happiness, that one cannot tell
If it be memory of some far-away
Or hope of something farther; if it be
Pale, tearful, tremulous Promise,—or Regret.

Only I know it is not gladness. No,
You can take hold of gladness, and sit down
Here in the midst of time; let time go by,
And have eternity. And well I know,
If there be any faith in any thing
There is such joy. But it is winter here.
You say, 'tis summer? Summer is for you;
Yours is another latitude than mine;
Half the world lies between your world and me.

Then, summer comes? Nay, pardon me, my friend;
Whether the summer ever come again
To me, who once knew summer far away
As 'twere in another world, and cannot know

Summer among the seasons where I dwell
Being in exile, and a stranger here,—
That is my secret, and God keepeth it:
He opens not His hand that I may see.

'Tis true I am not old as women are
Who win the full enfranchisement of age;
I am young, young in my unyielding years;
Time brings me not his blessed gifts, for still,
Though I be very tired of patience, sick
Of wintry days, still am I as of old,
Life lying yet untasted and undone.

I think there is no hunger matched with mine.
Here's joy enough for other women; love

Of them I love,—husband and children, yet
Ever within the body of my soul
There is a hunger of virginity
Which dreams in me unsatisfied, until
Its veil be rent, and it awake to know
The intimate thrill of love discovering it.

Now forty years I bear about in me
This dream, this hope that is a doubt, this voice
That only speaks its one articulate word
With dreary iteration, meaningless—
Meaningless all these forty years, and yet
It mocks the meaning of all words beside.

You said that I looked young. But in the glass
I see an age-old question-mark that is

Written upon my brain : can you not see—
Look in my eyes—can you not see it there ?

O God, I think 'tis stamped into the flesh,
So that if any answer ever came
I should go questioning still unto the end.
Into the flesh ? Nay, God Himself must take
This soul He made, maddened into despair
By His divine delay, with His own hands
He must accomplish in it the last change
And change it, that it may be satisfied.

IN SOLITUDE

LONELY he lived; but, as a sovereign peak
Catches and keeps the vapour of the fields
When it is sunny noon in them, he sate
Folded about in our perplexities.
The burden of our battle filled his ears,
Sounds of our pain besieged him,—and there closed
The fog and cloud of every loveless deed
Sullenly in upon his solitude.

A TESTAMENT

Ah, Change that changeth ! For awhile we touch
Assurance with our fingers, then our clutch
Is empty, and anon it is forgot ;—
Tell me, Beloved, whether love be such.

Ah, Change that changeth us from all we know !
We love, who knew not Love an hour ago—
Another hour, and Love must be forgot :—
Tell me, Beloved, if it be not so.

Must thou not pass, and I remain to miss
The glory gathered up into thy kiss,—
To grope in vain till I forget thee,—thou
Waking in other worlds, but I in this?

Nay, but thou wilt not leave me! Thou and I
Together while the changing worlds go by!
For Love is immortality, or else
It were a better thing for us to die.

Wherefore let us petition Love to be
Sole testament and bond 'twixt thee and me:
There is no pledge shall bind us, here or there,
Like His inalienable liberty.

Though change they bring, and death, He only
fears
No hurt from the inevitable years:
And if we lose His hand, Beloved, then
What is there but mortality and tears?

REALITY

RARE is that blossom of sweet memory
The dreamer's vision, out of days forgot
Mystically remembered and reborn
In eager, active-fingered, arduous days,
Yet never to be native there again.

Dream who may dream ! Rarer the ringing act
Chiming with act in perfect parallel
And building up invincible success,

Rounded as lies a poem on the page
And perfect as a song. Dream who would dream!
But here's the marble of reality,
And dreams may go.

But when the deed is done,
What is the thing accomplished? Is 't a flower,
A star, a passion, this accomplished thing?
Something to ring forever and for aye,
To burn and throb and blossom in God's hand
Until the ages cease? Or is it but
Handfuls of barren ashes and vain dust?

MUSIC

YONDER they sit in the immortal gloom,
Who, laying sacred hands upon the keys,
Erstwhiles unlocked their silent mysteries
To cry, with chords and clarions, of doom
And world-bewildering promise, till there come
Answer from all that dwell between the seas.
But now there is no noise about their knees;
Only afar the deathless echoes boom:
Silent are they and still. Then who is he
Dares enter now beside them and sit down

To shake those keys again with mortal hand ?
Calmly he comes to that high company :
He only sees the Music smile and frown,
He only hears the sound of its command.

GIORDANO BRUNO

THE flames leap up : leap angry flame,
Kind minister of Death and Shame !
Your blazing blade hews down the gate,
Loosing me to a larger fate.
Spirit of Fire, ardour of God,
Avenge me on this sullen clod !
Your light vest fitter seems for me
Than earth's time-tattered livery :
Yours are the spiritual wings
Whereon must ride the soul that sings

Music the body may not bear,
And hears what only spirits dare.

Leap up, ye flames! Bite out your smart,
And loose me to creation's heart!

THE CHALLENGE

WHERE Freedom is there once the women chose
To purchase it; and now at break of night
Ever across that land a bugle blows
Their challenge, and declares their ancient right:—

"These fields that ye inherit, we the unknown
Mothers of our Unconquerable Dead,
Have in the long-forgotten ages sown
Proudly for you, and left unharvested.

"Yielding no miserable gift to heaven
Dumbly obedient, as those who must,
We of our own unfettered choice have given
Our glory to you in eternal trust:

"We gave your land immortal garrison
Of spirits unsubdued, for ours were they,
Conceived and born of us, and every one
Suckled and set upon the dreadful way.

"God left it with us whether they should be
The petted nurslings of indulgent ease,
Gay truants from the toils of destiny;
But they were heroes from their mothers'
knees:

"They never turned away from hope or fear,
Nor dreamed a dream they dared not pledge in blood:
We prayed they might die conquerors, and here
They stood to perish in the onsweeping flood

"If the event were worthy them or no
Who questions? They were true, they would not yield:
But they were ours that died for you, and oh,
Inalienable is their battle-field."

RUSSIA, 187–

BECAUSE there was a blazing light
Kindled of God within his brain,
They shut him out of mortal sight,
And builded up their lies again.

About him fathoms deep, the stone
Is set, impenetrable, blind:
He stands at bay, guarding alone
The desperate treasure of his mind.

They took the world from his embrace;
They stole him from our destinies.
Sunshine nor shadow haunts that place;
There is no singing of the breeze;

Only the prying sentry light,
Only the smothered shrieks that tell
How ruthlessly the Hosts of Night
Carry some human citadel.

I know not whether any more
He bears his battle; even now
His body passes through the door
The sign of silence on its brow;

Vacant it goes, and he is gone.
Better we all had died instead,
For now he dies and we live on
With all our light of living dead.

It cannot be, my brothers ! Still
He lingers ; often leaps his blood
With the mysterious inner thrill
And heart-throb of our brotherhood :

Ay, though *Saint Peter and Saint Paul*
Entombs his body, he is ours,
And we will shake that triple wall
And we will trample down those towers.

Because there is a blazing light
Kindled of God within his brain,
Ye shut him out of mortal sight
And builded up your lies again.

But buried deep beneath the stone,
And sealed within the silence dim,
His heart is like a giant grown ;
The whole earth trembles over him.

Struggling there in the night, he starts
The passion throbbing in our veins ;
He wins his victory in our hearts,
His vision kindles in our brains,—

And that is Russia. Vainly you,
Though half the world be in your fee—
Dream to obliterate from view
The Russia that is yet to be!

Great White Tsar, I pity you when
Peter and Paul shall sometime make
Your broken spirit know what men
And women suffered for your sake:

I pity you when God shall turn
Our agony of torture in
Upon you; when you cannot spurn
Away the anguish of your sin,

But plain before you Russia stands
In all the madness and despair
Wrought by your own Imperial hands ;
When even you become aware

How beautiful she is, and how
She is not yours, not yours—unless
You claim the scar across her brow,
And in her voice the bitterness.

ATLAS

His face is dark; the burden of the day
Rests on his shoulders; patiently he stands
Supporting heaven itself in both his hands:
Ah, if he set it down, and went his way!

CELLINI'S PRAYER

I COULD not be a beggar, bowing knees
Always before You ; for You made me Man
To prove what's manhood in the splendid span
Of Your broad day ;—to front the Mysteries
As one who is a Master, and to seize
Boldly what craftsman's instrument he can
And chip and carve a corner of the Plan
Marked in the Marble of our Destinies.

But when You set me forth to stand at bay
Upon this Manhood, and to fling it down

Dauntless and ultimate before the world,
You promised You would set Your back that day
To mine and vindicate my faith's renown ;—
Then help me now the desperate pledge is hurled !

A SUNFLOWER IN A TOWN-GARDEN

He hath a kingly image, a sublime
Magnificence, as though his spirit were
The heart of some world-conquering wanderer :
Kindly he condescends to us who climb
Shouting and jostling to the gates of time :
He too hath striven, but now his royal fare
Is for the beggars and the bees to share,—
His gold untarnished by penurious crime.

Surely this is some battle-beaten soul
Of long ago, who having victory won,
Is now at peace with all the kindly earth;
Who comes contented with an old-time mirth
To find this narrow plot and claim control,
Sunflower and Viceroy of the very Sun!

FLOWERS

FLOWERS for the heart, and for the body meat,—
Feasting that either lacks is incomplete;
Needs must the world have bread, but oh, beside
Give me the poppies growing with the wheat!

And when along your mowing fields you pass,
Count in the tall moon-daisies with the grass;
Count the June roses, and the trespassing
Enchanted lover and his blushing lass.

For joy is gust of life; and then I wot
Will God erase the earth when, like a blot,
Unstarred it lies on heaven's manuscript,
The song and glory of its birth forgot.

APOLOGY

I AM a child who takes your hand
To look into your tearfulness
If he may something understand
Of that deep darkness of distress
Wherein you bear your lonely pain
Until the daylight comes again.

I am a child to kiss your eyes
And with my lips wipe off the tears;

I have no help that satisfies,
  Yet may it soothe a moment's fears
Even with wistful tears of mine
And faith that is but infantine.

Forgive a child who cannot more
  Than love you, if he sometime press
Too eagerly about the door
  Of your unspoken bitterness,
Or upon sacred silence break
With sobbing more than men would make.

And then you must forgive a child
  Where a man could not be forgiven,

When he is all too soon beguiled
From loving tears; when, gently driven
By Sorrow's self away, he tries
To entice you to his paradise.

AN OLD DIALOGUE

"WHO art thou, little one,
Sister of the violet?
Haste and tell me,
What is thy name?
Prithee—thine eyes are wet,
Sweetheart, little one,
Is it for shame?"
"Me they call Poverty,
That is my name.

"And thou that askest me—
Merry as a Mary-cup
Overbrimming
Full of the sun—
Thou, sir, that standest up
Tall, and askest me— ?"
"Me, little one ?
Francis, they christened me,
Bernadone's son.

"Wealth from the woolly sheep
Glitters in my father's till
Thee to purchase
Merrier name :
See, now, my hands I fill,

Give it to thee to keep
Sure against shame."
"Nay, I am Poverty,
That is my name."

"But oh, sweet Poverty,
What is 't I can give thee then?"
"Francis, Francis,
Child of the sun,
Flower in the mead of men,
Thou that lovest me
God's Little One,—
Give me thy merry heart,
Bernadone's son."

DRAGON'S TEETH

WHILE all men were at work, I went
To climb the top of Heaven's tent,
And looking down I saw beneath
An enemy sowing Dragon's Teeth,

Dropping them silently in the soil
Amid the peasant people's toil ;
All day long though the sun was high
Nobody saw him sowing but I.

Dragon's Teeth are little and grey,
Sharp and easily hidden away
Till they are to be unconcealed
Whetted white for the battle-field.

Out of his bag the Sower spills
Handfuls into the hopper of mills,
And the very bread we eat
Is Dragon's Tooth as well as wheat :

Out of his bag the Sower spills
Handfuls over the flying wheels,
And the very clothes we wear
Hide Dragon's Teeth among the hair :

Out of his bag the Sower spills
Handfuls into the running rills,
And the fishes streaked and brown
And the dead leaves carry them down,
Till the diver far beneath
Among the pearls finds Dragon's Teeth.

HOLY MARKETING

To heaven's market holy men repair
In vehicles of penitence and prayer
With baskets of desire, and there are given
All they can carry back again from heaven.

PARTNERSHIP

THE pear-tree thinks a thought divine
  And reads the mind of God ;
She understands how to combine
  The sunlight and the sod.

A little dust—a little rain—
  Enough ; the passionate pip
Fashions a pear-tree. It is plain
  She hath God's partnership.

THE LABOURER

I KNOW a little gladsome cot,
(My own, God wot)
Whose windows sparkle with the light
Be 't day or night,
Be 't sunbeam, lamp, or merry blaze.
Thither all days
Homeward my feet come hastening fast,
To find at last
The wicket, whose familiar creak
Doth welcome speak,

To see the handle shining out
Eager to shout
"Come in" to me, but then the mat
Reminds it that
No dirty-footed man can stray
Within that way.
Yet even while I rub and stand
Handle in hand,
The door itself leaps open wide,
Some one inside
Who is the spirit of the place
Finds out my face,
Unshaven, unwashen though it be,
And kisses me.

My little cot, for thee I toil
And make and moil,
As in the cold wet earth the root
Digs, for the fruit
That hangs in sunshine overhead
Juicy and red.

OVER A HONEYCOMB

(ON A MARBLE GROUP OF PAN AND BEARS, BY FRÉMIET IN THE LUXEMBOURG)

YOUR God is overcast with care
But mine is not so grave;
He is divinely debonair,
He is not Sorrow's slave;

For laughter like a tempest blows
Across His face, and fun
Is kindled there, because He knows
The secrets of the sun.

Oft when the village steeple calls
The sober folk to pray,
I climb above the waterfalls
And find Him far away :

The mass-bell rings, the people kneel,
The holy Thing is done ;
Fearfully glad the peasants steal
From that communion :

But up and up the mountain side
There is a path I know
Where only mountain shadows ride
And forest-creatures go ;

Beyond the meadow-plots, beyond
The clustering barns that keep
The garner of that careful land,
Into the forest-deep

It enters : there is He at play
With glad, innocent things,
My God, Whom all the stars obey
In all their journeyings ;

Who holds the terrors of the night
And keeps the morning's keys ;
Who closes in His matchless might
Ages and destinies.

Now where there is an emerald pool
Of sunshine in the wood,
And the fine mountain grass, that's full
Of flowers, is deep and good,

I have been watching how there strayed
Two solemn little bears
And how they found the honey laid
To catch them unawares,—

The comb of honey in the sun
Melting and hot and sweet,—
All through the grass the bright drops run
Between the bearkins' feet;

Half pushing forward eagerly,
Half pulling back in dread,
They nudge each other on, while He
Leans laughing overhead,

Mischievous pleasure in His eyes
As though He were a child,—
The bearkins are so fondly wise,
So prudently beguiled!

And with His rod He lies there yet
Poking their snouts, lest they
Lost in the honey, should forget
The God with whom they play.

THE LITTLE PEOPLE

I know a Little Folk content to dwell
In the eternal twilight of a forest
That cloaks the sun and stars, but shelters them:
There, all along measureless streets of shadow
Between the dark and daylight, haunt the tribes
Of Little People.

They come who carry lightning in their mien,
Whose voices wing the twisted word of magic,

Who utter fiats and accomplish them,
Who send their dreams about the world in thunder:
And as they come thickens the throng of those
Obedient to them,—

The throng of those uncertain and obscure
Who have no magic, who imagine nothing,
Whose words awake no echo, and whose eyes
Kindle no light (but when the vision flashes
They flame to it, and when the voice cries, then
They are its echo:)

These are the Little Folk, and they have all
The human joys and woes, yea, love and passion—

But smaller : myriad upon myriad they
In every land, so that no record may be
Beyond their silly names, their empty years,
Their thoughtless labour.

As one and one who would account them? These
Are but the creatures of the kings of knowledge,—
Mere human stuff, till a creative hand
Take and attempt, and mould it into something;—
Rebels or slaves, they do not understand
The giant's purpose.

Ruthless the giants seem, in multitudes
Treading them for the purple glow of glory

That robes a king; and if the goblets kiss
Beneath imperial vows of high achievement,
Nations of Little People were but grapes
Unto that vintage;

Ruthless sometimes, in insolent contempt
Of all who scan not the celestial circles,—
Wantonly wise; but others are there, they
That issue from the abysmal court of council
Flaming with Fate's sublime decree, their hearts
Sternly benignant,

Who if they rule with rods yet gather up
The woe they give into a great compassion

For these so slow to learn the lore of pain,
For these so sudden after flying pleasure ;
Yet must they rule, and must the Little Folk
Obey or suffer :—

Suffer, but not as men who entertain
Writhing at every stroke, the triple torture
Of bodies learnèd in the exquisite
Secrets of feeling, writhe and yet endure it
Supported by the fellowship of all
The patient ages:

Not so—the brothers minor suffer not
After so fierce a pattern ; yet upon them

Descends the same inevitable stroke,
And they—they are not solaced when they languish
By that old cordial, that sovereign cup
Of world-communion.

They never knew the illimitable noon,
They never dipped into the deep of midnight;
Bliss is not theirs though merry, nor despair
Though they be ignorant; daylight and dark
They know not, nor the timeless hours that are
In Hell and Heaven.

I know a Little Folk content to dwell
In the eternal twilight of a forest

That cloaks the sun and stars, but shelters them :
There, all along measureless streets of shadow
Between the dark and daylight, haunt the tribes
Of Little People.

CALIFORNIAN VERSES

L. of C.

MARCH WIND

Out of the breast of the calm inscrutable mountains,
The irresistible mirth that brightens the face of day
Comes galloping over the plains
And over the rolling hills,
To wake the sea with the song of the wakening earth.

Oh, rollicking wind
Your steps are in the tree-tops,

Your music is a multitude of feet:
For you the Cypress shakes her boughs, the
Eucalyptus
Empties upon you all his silken tassels.

Ah, what is the song you sing
Stepping in the tree-tops—
Words among the murmur
Of innumerable leaves?

The Gum-trees in their wonder dance together,
They love your footsteps; they laugh to feel your
coming,
They bow their lovely heads beneath
The insteps of your feet.
But as they dance they listen,

They listen, swaying till their tall tops touch ;
They stoop, they feel the rushing
Of the great words through them ;
They sigh back in the silence.
They are young Bacchantes
Shaken, shivering,
Possessed with the surprises of unbearable delight :
They have abandoned dream
And wakened up to ecstasy.

Wakener of forests on your path to the Pacific,
Ah, what is the song you sing
To these that know your footsteps,—
Words that make this murmur
Of innumerable leaves ?

IN THE SIERRAS

THE day pours down
Unmingled breathless draughts of August heat
Out of the great bowl of the blazing sky:
It fills the valleys up, and overflows
Across the ridges of the hills.

A stray syllabic tinkle
(Some milking-cow browsing alone along the thin
dry grass)

Passes unanswered,
And sinks into the silence and the slumber
Of the untenanted day.

But when the bowl is empty,—when
Earth turns her shoulder on the masterful sun,—
The hills draw a faint breath, and a waft comes
Along the valleys,—
Comes, quivering up the aromatic paths
Heavily sweet with stirring the hot leaves.

Then the moon's brow breaks slowly from the pines,
Like an amber cloud but purer:

Earth wonders at her coming ; the dusky hills
Ring to the chirrup of crickets :
Then all is still :—the moon
Walking the silent piney ridges,
Overburdened with light.

A RAILROAD BUILDER

LONG time ago, beside these Sunset Seas,
He found this Garden of Hesperides
Guarded by dragon distances, and drew
His double steel upon them till he slew :
But now himself at handle of that blade
Keepeth the garden which the gods have made.

They who are privileged to taste the fruit
Enter therewith upon that wild dispute
Which all men bandy, and at last aver
He is both tyrant and deliverer.

IN ENGLAND—MAY

(TO —— AT THE PIANO)

If mine could write it as your fingers play,
Across the village and its white highway,
Across the park and palings, you should feel
The sea-breeze blowing through the Golden Gate
Among the many-shouldered hills.
The Bay
Would bid us out again on holiday,
And Tamalpais would set his perfect line
Against the blazing noon.

And you and I
Would make a lovers' picnic in a nook
By some deep runnel, that carves out his way
Among the naked roots of giant trees
Darkening up above,—ancient until
The wonder of the centuries of Man
Seems as a child's.
Then while the shredded light
Twinkled about the gloom of those huge limbs
Circling us in,—then would we sigh and say
"How good to be in *England*, just for May!"

ENVOI

(TO MY WIFE)

So little have I done—this little book—
Of all I would do, nor have finished it,
Nor any part made perfect as I would
Had I the swifter sight, the finer touch ;
But little as it is, it is for thee.
What were it else but an unmothered thing,
An elf-child, a preposterous, pitiful
Waif, unrelated to a living soul ?

And, wonder though it is, were 't not for thee
What were the wonder of this wide new land—
These thronging faces with their challenges
To thought,—but hostile, and great loneliness;
But now it is become that generous land
Where first we made our home together, first
Went hand in hand about the good day's work
Gladdening through it hour upon blue hour.

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